

Waltham Police Department

Shooting and Traumatic Incident Procedures Chapter 1B

General Order #: GO- 01 2009

Effective Date: 01/2009

Accred Standard #'s: 1.3.5,1.3.8

Law enforcement duties can expose officers, auxiliaries, civilians and support personnel to mentally painful and highly stressful situations that may not be resolved through normal stress coping mechanisms. Unless adequately treated, these situations can cause disabling emotional and physical problems. It is the responsibility of the Waltham Police Department to provide personnel with information, counseling, and guidance to those involved in the traumatic incident. It is also imperative that a step by step process be in place (below) to guide supervisory personnel in their roles at and away from the scene.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to provide members of the Waltham Police Department with guidelines and procedures to follow after an officer involved shooting incident, any incident where an employee's actions or use of force in an official capacity results in death or serious physical injury to another, or any other traumatic incident. **[1.3.8]**

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Waltham Police Department to take action after incidents where an officer is involved in any shooting or any traumatic incident. The Waltham Police Department will take all steps to safeguard the continued good mental health of all involved personnel. **[1.3.8]**

DEFINITIONS:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: An anxiety disorder that can result from exposure to short-term severe stress, or the long-term buildup of repetitive and prolonged milder stress.

Officer-Involved Shooting Incident: A line-of-duty incident where shooting causes death or serious bodily injury to an officer or other person.

PROCEDURES:

Supervisory handling of Officers at Scene of Shooting/ Traumatic Incident

Cross Reference: Chapter 1 Use of Force: “Review by Commanding Officer”

1. A supervisor shall be dispatched to the scene of the incident, and shall assume primary responsibility in caring for involved personnel.
2. A supervisor shall make appropriate arrangements for all necessary medical treatment [1.3.5]
3. A supervisor will call a union representative (to the extent that the union is not already alerted to the incident) to alert the union to the incident
4. During any period where the involved officer is required to remain on the scene, but has no immediate duties to fulfill, the officer should be taken to a quiet area away from the scene of the incident. A stress officer or other supportive friend or officer should remain with the officer, but should be advised not to discuss details of the incident.
5. Where possible, the supervisor shall briefly meet with the involved officer.
 - a. No caffeine or other stimulants or depressants should be given to the officer unless administered by medical personnel.
 - b. The officer will not be questioned about the incident at the scene. The officer should be advised that a more detailed debriefing with report will be conducted at a later time.
 - c. Reports should be submitted within a reasonable amount of time, with due regard for the individual and circumstances of each incident
 - d. The officer(s) should be advised that he or she may seek union representation and/or legal counsel.
 - e. The officers should be advised not to discuss the incident with anyone except a personal or agency attorney until the conclusion of the preliminary investigation.
6. When an officer has used force that has resulted in a death or injury, or when the discharge of his/her firearm has resulted in any injury, the supervisor shall:
 - a. take custody of the officer’s weapon in a discreet manner;

- b. and replace it with another weapon, such as the on-scene supervisor's weapon.
- 7. Involved officers should notify their families about the incident as soon as possible. Where an officer is unable to do so, an agency official shall personally notify his or her family, and arrange for transportation if needed.
- 8. At all times, when at the scene of the incident, the supervisor should handle the officer and all involved personnel in a manner that acknowledges the stress caused by the incident.

Post-Incident Procedures

- 1. When an employee has used force or any action that has resulted in a death or serious physical injury, or when an officer has discharged his/her firearm which has resulted in any injury, the employee involved will be immediately reassigned to temporary administrative duty. This assignment shall remain in effect pending an administrative review of the circumstances surrounding the incident. Such re-assignment shall not be considered punishment or any indication of wrongdoing. During this time of administrative re-assignment, post-incident debriefing and counseling for those involved will be administered. **[1.3.8]**
- 2. Involved personnel shall be removed from line duties pending evaluation but shall remain available for any necessary administrative investigations.
- 3. All employees directly involved in the shooting or traumatic incident shall be contacted by a department designated specialist (stress officer) for counseling and evaluation as soon as practical after the incident. Involved support personnel should also be encouraged to contact such specialists after a shooting incident. After counseling sessions, the specialist or supervisor of the Employee Support Services Unit shall advise the agency:
 - a. whether it would in the employee's best interest to remain on or to be placed on administrative leave or light duty, and for how long; **[1.3.8]**
 - b. Where the officers were relieved on their duty weapons after an incident, at what point they should be returned;
 - c. What will be the best continued course of counseling for any employee
- 4. The Waltham Police Department strongly encourages the families of the involved employee to take advantage of available counseling services.
- 5. Any WPD investigation of the incident shall be conducted as soon as possible.
- 6. The WPD should brief other employees concerning the incident so that rumors are kept to a minimum.

7. All personnel involved in an a shooting or traumatic incident should be advised that they are not permitted to speak with the media about the incident. Inquiries from the media shall be referred to a designated agency spokesperson, unless otherwise authorized to release a statement pertaining to the incident.
8. Officers directly involved in the shooting incident shall be required to re-qualify prior to returning to full duty status.

Daily Stress Recognition

1. As post-traumatic stress disorders may not arise immediately, or the officer may attempt to hide the problem, the supervisor and designated stress officer is responsible for monitoring the behavior of unit members for symptoms of the disorder.
2. A supervisor, through the OIC of the Employee Services Unit, may order an employee to seek assistance or counseling from a mental health specialist upon a reasonable belief that stress may be disrupting the employee's job performance.

Investigator's Responsibilities

Investigation of any incident resulting in death or serious physical injury shall be the responsibility of the Investigative Services Division under the direction of the Commanding Officer - Internal Affairs, with the full assistance of the Investigative Division and the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office. The Range Master and or State Police Ballisticians shall secure the weapon or weapons used for examination. Normal investigation procedures for the type of incident should be followed.